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January 31, 2005

Mr. Donald W. Adams
Environmental Services Director
County of Stearns
Administration Center
Room 343
705 Courthouse Square
St. Cloud, MN 56303

Mr. Rick Heuring
Field Representative
Great River Energy
17845 East Highway 10
P.O. Box 800
Elk River, MN 55330-0800

RE: Rockville 115 kV Transmission Line and Substation Upgrade

Dear Mr. Sirs:

This letter confirms that the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB) has received notification that Great River Energy (GRE) and Stearns Electric Association (SEA) propose to construct 3.75 miles of new 115 kV transmission line and a substation upgrade in Stearns County, Minnesota. Stearns County is recognized as the RGU for the Rockville transmission line and substation project.

This project falls under the Power Plant Siting Act, Minnesota Statutes § 116C.51-.69, and Minnesota Rules chapter 4400, which, for most transmission line projects over 100 kV, requires a permit from the EQB. Minn. Stat. § 116C.61 subd.1 provides that the EQB permit supersedes and preempts all zoning, building, or land use rules, regulations, or ordinances promulgated by regional, county, local, and special purpose government. However, for eligible projects, a utility may apply to those local units of government that have jurisdiction over the route for approval to build the project instead of applying to the EQB. The proposed 115 kV transmission line and substation project is eligible for local review. [Minn. Stat. § 116C.576 and Minn. R. part 4400.5000 subp. 2 C]

GRE has indicated that a Conditional Use Permit application was submitted to Stearns County on January 18, 2005, and that Stearns County has been informed that they have 60 days to refer the permitting process to the EQB. A local unit of government may relinquish its jurisdiction by requesting the EQB to assume jurisdiction within 60 days of the filing of an application with the local unit of government. [Minn. R. 4400.5000 subp. 4]

An environmental assessment must be prepared by the local unit of government with jurisdiction over the project. The EQB has received a copy of the *Environmental Assessment for the Proposed Rockville 115 kV Project* from Stearns County. [Minn. R. 4400.5000 subp. 5]

Specific requirements with regard to the environmental review process include an opportunity for the public to participate in the development of the scope of the environmental assessment before it is prepared; notice published in the EQB Monitor of when the assessment is available for review and of the procedure for commenting on the assessment; and that the final decision on the project will not be made until at least ten days after the notice appears in the EQB Monitor.

Also note that GRE is required to send notice to those persons on the EQB power plant siting general notification list that a permit has been applied for from the local unit of government.
[Minn. R. 4400.5000 subp. 3]

If there are any other questions, please feel free to contact me by phone or email.

Sincerely,



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